



# Weekly Hot News Update

March 26, 2008

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## On the Hill

Here's what we're tracking this week for EUCOM.

### *Bills of Interest:*

**HR 1585** - National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2008

- This bill would establish and fund counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan.
- Pocket vetoed by the President on December 31, 2007.
- Agreed to by a voice vote in the House on January 15.

**HR 2003** - Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007

- This bill would encourage and facilitate consolidation of security, human rights, democracy, and economic freedom in Ethiopia. This would include counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
- This bill was received in the Senate, after passage in the House on October 3.

**HR 2228** - Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Bill

- Closely related to HR 2003 this bill would also encourage the development of Ethiopia while also implementing counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

**HR 2446** - Afghanistan Freedom and Security Support Act of 2007

- This bill provides funding for programs to stabilize Afghanistan and counter the drug trade.
- This bill passed the House and was sent to the Senate, which referred it to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

**HR 2764** - Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008

- This bill includes appropriations for "international narcotics control and law enforcement."
- Became public law on December 26, 2007. Public Law No. 110-161.

### *Hearings of Interest:*

There are no hearings of interest scheduled for this week.

### *Whispers from Congress:*

Congress will continue its spring recess this week; with the exception of a few field based hearings, the House will not be active on the Hill and the Senate will continue to meet only in pro forma sessions. Congress will resume normal business on Monday, March 31. Last week, Representative Tom Reynolds, R-NY, announced that he will be retiring from public service; Reynolds is the latest in a string of Republicans to leave office within the last year. Democrats contend that a vacancy in his seat will provide a golden opportunity to increase their control of congress. Tom Reynolds represented the NY 26<sup>th</sup> district since 1998 and served on the House Ways and Means committee.

## Inside the Administration

A report by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs on Afghan opium/heroin production and trade, dated march 11<sup>th</sup>, has been recently made available on the U.S. State Department website. In the opening paragraph, the report framers indicate that

they've created the document in order to allay skepticism concerning the Afghan drug trade and to clarify policy and progress. The effectiveness of the counter-narcotic effort in Afghanistan has been increasingly questioned over the past year; rather than regurgitate hard data and statistics, this report is a platform to counter various critical charges and misconceptions regarding the Afghan drug trade. Curiously, the report is not profoundly in-depth; it does provide a question and answer section addressing basic concerns and addresses several important topics. Included here are the strong connections between the Taliban insurgency and poppy production and the complexities of eradicating crops and arresting opium growers. The report also mentions that markets for heroin in Central Asia, Russia and China are growing. Interestingly, the release of this report indicates the State Department finds itself having to dispel erroneous notions and debunk myths on Afghanistan much like EUCOM and DOD have to reiterate policy and intentions regarding AFRICOM. The release of this statement was timely simply because the situation in Afghanistan affects all regions in the EUCOM and AFRICOM AOR's. In fact, a multitude of reports have surfaced this weekend detailing the impact of the Afghan drug trade on various other global regions. Two lengthy articles on the growth of air-mail heroin deliveries from Afghanistan to the UK and Australia and three sizable reports on the expanding Afghan heroin trade through Kenya highlight these connections. Operational headaches, similar to those in Afghanistan, could also manifest themselves in Africa. With the exception of Moroccan hashish cultivation, Africa is primarily a transit zone for drugs (although like Southwest Asia, domestic consumption of narcotics is growing) thus contending with the connections between regional politics and drug production is less of a concern. However, given fractious nature of African politics, corruption, lack of transparency and power of narco-profits, reconciliation between politics and drug money in some countries could prove to be difficult. To view the State Department document please access the following link:

<http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/other/102214.htm>

## ***Washington Influences***

For the first time ever, the United Kingdom Cabinet Office has released a report outlining a National Security Strategy for the Kingdom. This report comes at most critical time; policy officials and intelligence agencies are increasingly warning of terror campaigns being waged across Europe. A number of events have taken place over the last week indicating the threat of impending terrorist actions in Europe will not recede any time soon. For example, the Web-based company, Network Solutions, has recently decided not to allow the presentation of a controversial "anti-Koran" movie for fear that it would incite violence reaction from extremist circles within Western Europe or abroad. Additionally last week, Bin Laden released an audiotape warning that Europe will face a "severe reckoning" for continued publishing and distribution of the controversial Muhammad cartoons. Additionally, after a recent visit with Justice Ministers in Europe, U.S. AG Michael Mukasey expressed surprise at the depth and scope of potential worldwide terror threats. He also indicated that European officials have a high degree of anxiety over terror threats to Europe. The UK report is not only timely but addresses a number of security concerns beyond terrorism. These include transnational crime, weapons proliferation and the problems that failed and failing states pose to global security. Interestingly, the report is subtitled "Security in an interdependent world" clearly indicating that these threats are not only global but that effectively countering them will require greater international cooperation. The report also provides a section on the UK's response. This report is important not only because it is the first of in the UK, but that it recognizes a link between transnational organized crime, insurgencies and terrorism. The UK is one of a few nations in Western Europe to have suffered a devastating terror attack and is also one of the biggest consumption markets in the international drug trade. The UK is also a home to major Diaspora communities from the Middle East and a recognized hub for international money laundering. To view the UK National Security Strategy report, please access the following link:

[http://interactive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/documents/security/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://interactive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/documents/security/national_security_strategy.pdf)

## *Around the Corner*

The threat of Islamic terrorism in Europe continues to be a huge concern and a multitude of sources continue to report on the subject. Two articles, dated March 18th and March 23rd have paid direct attention to these trends. Dr. Walid Phares, a noted expert on terrorism and Middle Eastern issues has written a piece on Bin Laden's latest threats and what it means for Europe. The article also addresses the various possible directions that Europe may be headed in response to an amplified terror threat. Dr. Phares points out that while some countries may be taking a harsher stance against terrorism, Al-Qaeda can still rely on a strong appeasement/apologist community throughout the continent. In another article published by The Jamestown Foundation, the subject of examination is Bin Laden's son, Omar Bin Laden, who many see as a possible propaganda agent for Al-Qaeda. Interestingly, Omar Bin Laden fits the profile of what subject matter experts deem to be a growing internal threat to Western nations; a terror operative who looks, talks and acts the part of a Westerner. While undercover terror operators have long camouflaged their activities with Western behaviors, many suspect that Omar Bin Laden, who has become a Muslim quasi-celebrity, may have moved beyond simply 'blending in' and into the position of 'disinformation agent.' The Jamestown article includes additional points regarding the greater European-terror phenomenon as well as opinions and attitudes of Europe towards these threats. Needless to say, extremist action on the European continent will only become more important as time progresses. Additionally, the connections between terrorism and international crime and the links between Europe and its neighboring continents will only become more prominent as evidence is unearthed. TCG will continue to research, analyze and report on these intertwined problems. Please access the following links to view both articles:

<http://worlddefensereview.com/phares032308.shtml>

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374043>

On the African continent, the upcoming elections in Zimbabwe should prove to be an interesting event. The current and long-standing President, Robert Mugabe, will seek another term after serving over 20 years as the country's "elected" head of state. Interestingly, Mugabe, who has been the nation's only ruler, introduced a last-second alteration to election rules. As of Monday, police officers now will be allowed in polling stations, a move his opponents believe is an attempt to intimidate voters. Just instituted last year as part of election reform, the law requiring that police stay at least 100 meters from polling stations is no longer in effect. President Mugabe claims the change is so police officers can assist illiterate and disabled voters. Given the post-election disaster in Kenya, and the suspected rigged Zimbabwe elections in 2002, the 2008 elections are a call for concern and should be watched.

### Selected News for EUCOM

- 'The Problem Is not Data Storage, It's Terrorism'
- Gordon Brown unveils first National Security Strategy
- Russia to decide soon on NATO Afghan route
- AFGHANISTAN: Students play truant to work in Helmand's poppy fields
- Serbia's neighbours recognise Kosovo

## The Lighter Side

### Quote of the Week

*"You can't build a reputation on what you're going to do."*

*-Henry Ford*

*"When you can't make them see the light, make them feel the heat."*

*-Ronald Reagan*

### Prediction of the Week

*OK, so we were a little off on our Connecticut "sleeper" pick in the NCAA's - as the NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four is selected this week, look for our original picks (North Carolina, Kansas and Texas) to be joined by UCLA to round out the best four teams in the country.*

## Contact Us

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